

Post 5/11/65

# Today and Tomorrow . . . By Walter Lippmann

## Compulsive Talking

THE 20TH anniversary of the Nazi surrender has come and gone in a whirl of words which has done nothing to clarify and much to muddle up the unsettled problems remaining from the World War.

There has been, for example, the demand of the Erhard government for an Allied statement on the reunification of Germany. Why was this demand made? Quite evidently, as part of Dr. Erhard's election campaign and for the purpose of identifying him as the active champion of a united Germany.

Yet it was quite evident from the beginning that the wit of man could not devise a formula which all four of the victorious allies would sign, nor, as a matter of fact, one which all three Western allies would sign. The Ambassadorial Steering Group in Washington has been wrangling for several weeks as to whether German reunification was in the interest of "all European peoples" or was in the interest of "the peoples of the whole world." The result of the exercise has been to sharpen and harden unnecessarily and gratuitously the differences which divide France and America and the Soviet Union.

THE COMPULSION of politicians to talk too much is in our day a very big obstacle to accomplishing what they all say they want to do. For this compulsive talking has conjured up the



Lippmann

fundamentally unreal conflict between nationalism and what is now called Atlanticism. I call it unreal for surely the truth of the matter is that the national state on the one hand, the Atlantic Community on the other, are elementary and indelible realities for all the peoples who belong to Western civilization.

To suppose that nationalism can or will give way to supranationalism is to deny the facts of life. We are all nationalists, no people more so than ourselves, and the spectacle of Lyndon Johnson chiding Charles de Gaulle for his nationalism is a case of the pot calling the kettle black. To be sure, when nationalism degenerates into jingoism it becomes a danger to the peace of the world and must be resisted. But if nationalism can be a force for evil, it is also a force for good. In the person of Churchill, British nationalism saved Great Britain, Europe and the world. In the person of Charles de Gaulle, nationalism has raised the French people out of defeat and degradation. In Eastern Europe, including the Soviet Union itself, nationalism is the strongest force working against global revolutionary communism.

There is no irreconcilable conflict, in fact there is no real conflict, between Greater Europe as a community or concert of sovereign national states and the inevitable fact of history and geography that Europe and the Americas are tied together in their ultimate interests because they are connected by the Atlantic Ocean.

IF THE politicians would stop reading speeches con-

sisting of the stereotypes and rubber stamps of a period that is passing, they would assist the peaceful developments which are now taking place. What is happening in Europe is the beginning of an attempt to transform the Little Europe of the Cold War of the 1950's into a Greater Europe which will heal the divisions of Europe and the division of Germany.

Insofar as there is a conflict between General de Gaulle and the United States, it rises out of his objection to special relationships—for which we seem to have a special propensity—between Washington on the one hand, London and/or Bonn on the other. This matter of the special relationships is the gritty, concrete essence of the Franco-American differences. The Gaullist case is that Britain cannot be a true partner in Europe if in the vital matters—British solvency and British overseas interests—London looks not to Europe but to Washington. As to Germany the Gaullist case is that there will be no European unity and no peaceful reunification of the two Germanys as long as Bonn has a special military relationship with the United States.

IN MY VIEW, the sound European policy for this country is to give up the idea of leading Europe and, quietly, to assist and encourage the movement towards that Greater Europe which is actually under way. For our own highest interest in Europe is that Europe should flourish and, in its own way, play a part in the world.

© 1965, The Washington Post Co.